



A simple guide to Gemba Walk

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Gemba Walk

What

Gemba: meaning

Gemba (also written “genba”): Japanese word meaning “the real place.” It’s where value creation happens, but also where most problems occur.

Gemba walk: definition

In the manufacturing world, a Gemba walk is the action of walking around a factory floor, or any other department, to identify problems and improvement ideas.

Why

The Gemba walk is essential to sustain a company’s continuous improvement culture. It represents the first step in a structured process that aims to systematically identify improvement opportunities and transform these ideas into improvement plans. Here are just a few reasons to do it regularly:

Top-level and middle management

- ⚙ Increase productivity;
- ⚙ Increase OEE (Overall Equipment Effectiveness);
- ⚙ Reduce health and safety hazards;
- ⚙ Increase team leaders, lower management and workers autonomy;
- ⚙ Shift from reactive to proactive supervision.

Team leaders

- ⚙ Increase credibility;
- ⚙ Increase proactive supervision;
- ⚙ Reduce time spent on reactive problem solving;
- ⚙ Increase time spent on improvement projects;
- ⚙ Mobilize team members;
- ⚙ Simplify problem management.

Floor level employees

- ⚙ Day to day problems are being seen, understood and solved;
- ⚙ Increase implication in the improvement projects;
- ⚙ Decrease waiting time;
- ⚙ Decrease stress;
- ⚙ Improve processes and tools;
- ⚙ Increase feedback.

Goal

Identify and solve issues before they have an impact.

Identify and generate improvement opportunities.



How

How to implement a strong Gemba Walk structure

1. **Organizational chart**

The first step is to put the company's organizational chart up to date to determine who oversees what department (and who). The best tool to do so is probably Visio from Microsoft, but Lucidchart can do the job just fine for free. It is critical to define clear roles and responsibilities at this stage.

2. **Introduction meeting**

The top executive holds a meeting with all the team leaders, presenting the Gemba Walk and explaining [why](#) it's useful for them. This step is vital to reduce resistance to change.

3. **Set-up Gemba Walk checklists**

In collaboration with each team leaders, create a list of verification points that they must validate with every work units in their department every two hours. Always remember, these checklists must aim to identify and reduce waste. It is important that the workers know that the Team leaders are performing these Gemba Walks to help them and find solutions, not to punish them.

4. **Standard schedule**

Set-up a recurring 4 times per day event in the team leaders schedule so that they don't forget to do their Gemba walks. For level 2 management, a Gemba Walk should be performed twice per day. For a standard schedule example, have a look at [page 5](#).

5. **Effective Gemba walk training**

Shadow every team leaders' Gemba walk individually at least once a week to make sure they carry it out in the right way. (See [How to conduct a Gemba Walk](#) for details)

6. **Schedule improvement meetings**

At least once a week, set a recurring meeting in the team leaders' schedule to be carried out with the plant manager. The goal of this meeting is to follow up on improvement plans that are in progress and create new ones from the new improvement opportunities they found during the past week. Your team leaders might tell you they don't have time, but they must understand they'll save time by preventing problems through Gemba Walks rather than solving them after they happen.

7. **Sustain the Gemba**

Remember, we are trying to achieve **continuous** improvement, which means these practices should be carried out every day. We strongly recommend setting goals for how many new improvement opportunities each team leaders should come up with every week. We recommend setting the goal to 2 new improvement opportunities per week per team leader.

How to conduct an effective Gemba Walk

- ⚙️ Validate all the points on the checklist with every work unit.
- ⚙️ Remember that those questions are asked to identify potential issues and improvement opportunities until the next Gemba Walk.
- ⚙️ Ask questions in a solution-oriented way rather than trying to find who's at fault.
- ⚙️ Validate with the worker on every question by asking what, why and how. For example:

Painting Gemba Walk checklist question	Follow up questions
Is the worker aware of all the work order information for the current job?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What is the colour code for the job? ○ What is the quality standard for the job? ○ How many pieces do you have to paint in that batch? ○ How do you usually paint that kind of piece? ○ Why do you do it like that? ○ If you had to do it your way, how would you do it?

- ⚙️ Document an issue with the relevant information when you identify one.
- ⚙️ Write something next to the worker's name only if there is a potential issue.
- ⚙️ An effective Gemba Walk should not take more than 15 minutes (~1min/work unit).
- ⚙️ Wait before the Gemba Walk has been completed to address issues. Assessing all the work units in your department before taking action ensures an excellent prioritization.

After the Gemba walk

1. Make a quick evaluation of the risk and the impact of every potential issue and then compare them to each other.
2. Prioritize the issues in the order in which you think they should be solved.
3. Solve the issues in the order you just chose.
4. Once these potential issues are solved and you made sure everything is under control until the next Gemba Walk, look for improvement opportunities in the issues you brought up in the Gemba Walk. Every issue that could be prevented by standardizing procedures, implementing a 5S, a Kanban system, conducting a SMED, buying new equipment or tools, etc. qualifies as an improvement opportunity.
5. Use a system to list all your improvement opportunities, preferably linking the following information to it:
 - Team leader name
 - Work station
 - Checklist point that made you come up with the idea
 - Internal impacts Eg. Operation cost, lead time, productivity, quality, leadership, process, internal communications, health and safety, etc.
 - Customer impacts Eg. Financial, delivery time, quality, customer service, etc.
 - Other work center impacted
 - Date and time

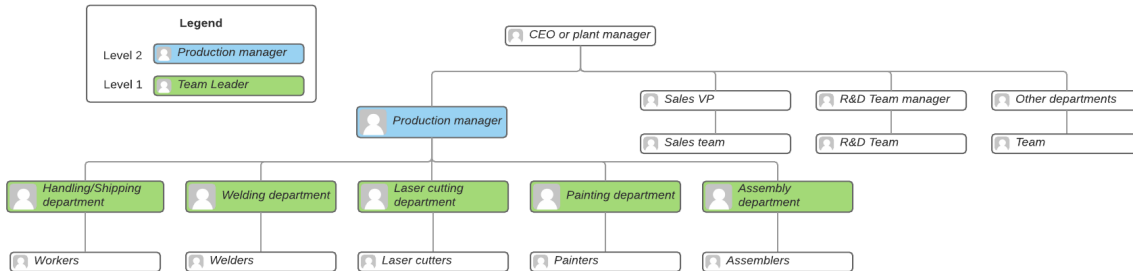
Improve

- ⚙️ Once a week, the plant manager or the operation manager should conduct an improvement meeting with all the team leaders.
- ⚙️ The improvement meeting's objective is to ensure a follow up on the improvement plans already in place and to put new ones in place if the team leaders' schedule allows it.

Templates & examples

Organization chart example

It's essential to thoroughly define in the organization chart who controls what department to make sure the Gemba Walks are being performed on the right work units by the right managers.



Standard schedule

Having a standard schedule is key to improve performance. A worker that knows their supervisor's schedule will wait until then to ask questions or make requests, consequently saving time for both the employee and his supervisor. We recommend scheduling the Level 2 Gemba Walk right after the second Level 1 Gemba Walk. This way, the information from the two previous Level 1 Gemba Walks can be shared with the production manager.

Level 1 (team leader)	Level 2 (production manager)
00:00 – 07:00	00:00 – 07:00
07:00	07:00
08:00 - Gemba Walk 1	08:00
09:00	09:00
10:00 - Gemba Walk 2	10:00 - Gemba Walk Team Leaders 1
11:00	11:00
12:00	12:00
13:00	13:00
13:30 - Gemba Walk 3	14:00
15:00	15:00
15:30 - Gemba Walk 4	15:45 - Gemba Walk Team Leaders 2
16:00	16:00
17:00	17:00
18:00	18:00
19:00	19:00
20:00 – 00:00	20:00 – 00:00

Excel templates

Here is a link to download excel templates for Gemba Walk: [Templates](#)

Examples of checklists

Level 1 checklist (Team leader to operators) for a welding department

The goal is to identify two main categories of problems:

1. **Issues that occurred in the past:** to help generate new questions in the checklist to prevent those problems from happening again.
2. **Issues that might happen soon:** to prevent them from happening and create proactive measures to minimize the risk of it coming back.

Time	Category	Subcategory	Checklist examples
Past	Requirements	Information	Has there been any problems related to required tools, material, personnel or information in the past two hours that we didn't see coming?
	Quality		Has there been any problems related to quality in the past two hours that we didn't see coming?
	Productivity		Has there been any problems related to productivity in the past two hours that we didn't see coming?
Now	Requirements	Worker	Is the worker at his workstation?
			Is the worker punched on the right job?
		Information	Is the worker aware of all the information on the work order for the current job?
			Does the work order provide all the needed specifications?
			Does the worker know the procedures and standards for the current job?
		Equipment	Does the worker have the proper training for the current job?
			Does the employee have all the necessary tools for the current job?
			Are the tools in good working order?
		Material	Is the 5S respected?
	Is the equipment working well? Does it need maintenance?		
	Does the worker have all the required material for the current job?		
	Quality	Information	Is the worker aware of the quality standards for the current job?
			Are quality standards respected?
		Material	Is the quality rate goal known and respected?
	Productivity	Information	Are Health and Safety standards respected?
Does the production rate follow the schedule?			
Is the takt time respected?			
Future	Requirements	Information	Does the worker know the next priority?
			Is the worker aware of all the information on the work order for the next job?
			Does the worker have all the required material for the next job?
			Does the worker know the procedures and standards for the next job?
		Does the employee have the proper training for the next job?	
	Equipment	Does the employee have all the required tools for the next job?	
Material	Will the parts will be ready and available at the right time?		

Again, we suggest keeping the Level 1 Gemba Walk under 15 minutes and to perform it at least every two hours. If there are too many questions in the checklist, team leaders won't identify more problems, but rather let them slip. Keep it short, but effective. Think [80/20](#) (Pareto Principle).



Level 2 checklist (Manager to Team leaders)

Team leaders don't always have the power, the authority or the time to address the issues they stumble onto. Therefore, it's important for the manager to perform regular and scheduled (although less frequent) Gemba Walks after the team leaders' to share information. We recommend performing a level 2 Gemba Walk for every two Level 1 Gemba Walks performed by the team leaders.

Time	Category	Subcategory	Checklist examples
Past	Requirements	Information	Has there been any problems related to required tools, material, personnel or information in the past two hours that we didn't see coming?
			Quality
	Productivity		Has there been any problems related to productivity in the past two hours that we didn't see coming?
			Could we reduce waste?
			Are there any issues to transfer?
Now	Requirements	Worker	Did the team leader perform his two Gemba Walks?
		Information	Is the team leader aware of the priorities?
		Equipment	Is the equipment working well? Does it need maintenance?
		Material	Does the department all the necessary material for the current job?
	Quality	Information	Are quality standards respected?
		Material	Is the quality rate goal known and respected?
	Productivity	Information	Are Health and Safety standards respected?
			Does the production rate follow the schedule?
			Is the takt time respected?
Future	Requirements	Information	Does the department need more people for the next job?
		Information	Are there any other issues to talk about?



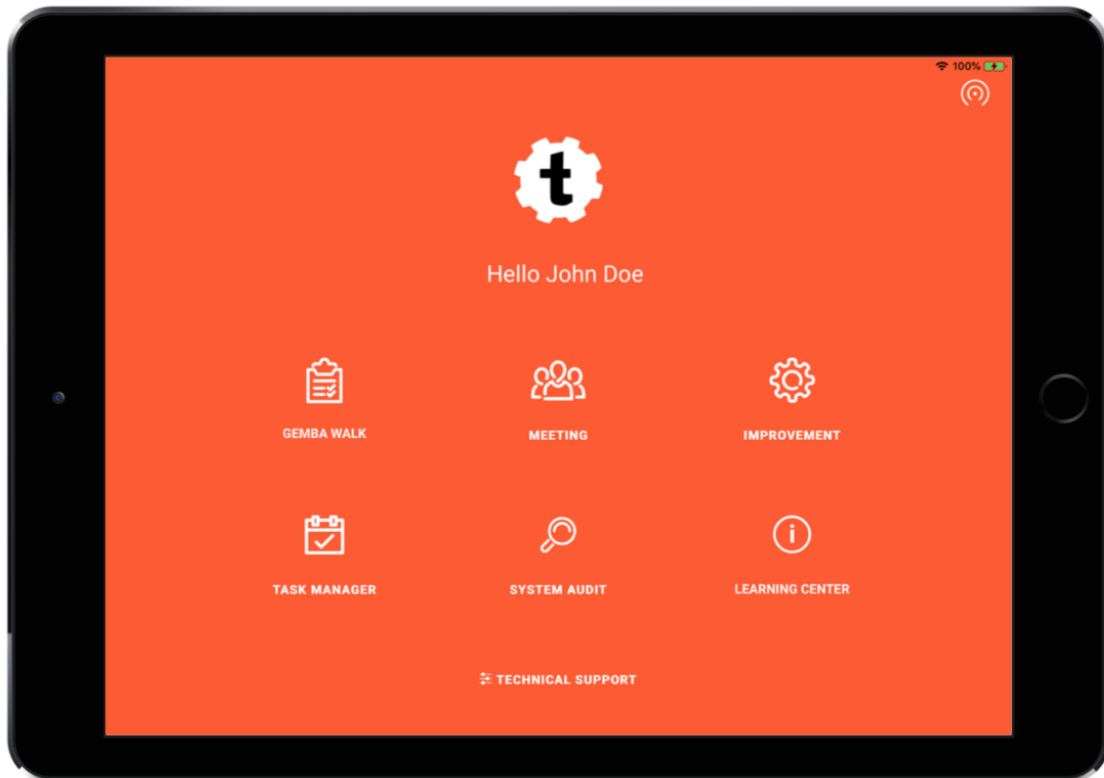
Tervene's Gemba Walk

While it can seem easy to perform Gemba Walks, it can become a struggle to develop the right system to document and manage Gemba Walk reports as well as to compile the data. It is also important to mention that the main challenge people come across when trying to implement a continuous improvement culture involving Gemba Walks is to sustain the project over time. The culprit: Change Resistance to inefficient and unnatural management behaviours.

Technology will never perform the Gemba Walk for you, but it can at least remove most of the hassle for the user. It can facilitate the documentation, evaluation and management of the information and the reports.

Here are a few reasons why you might want to consider performing your Gemba Walks with Tervene's Software:

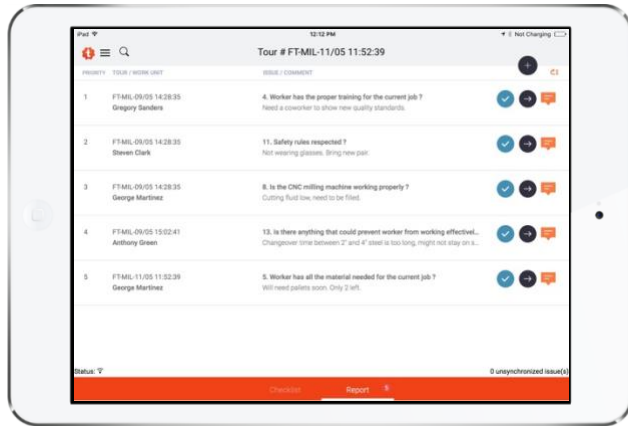
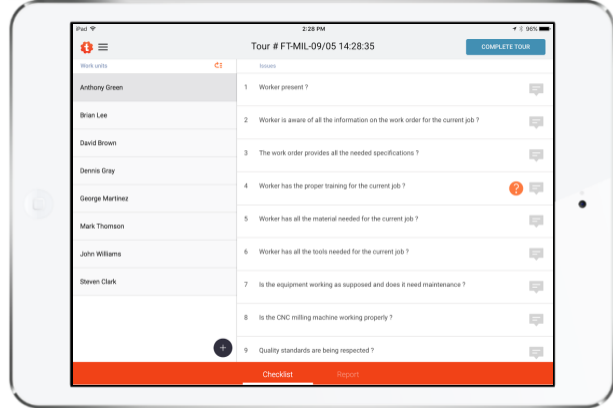
- ⚙️ Simplicity
- ⚙️ Visibility
- ⚙️ Centralized improvement tool
- ⚙️ Support





Simplicity

Here's how Tervene's solution can help you manage your Gemba Walks.

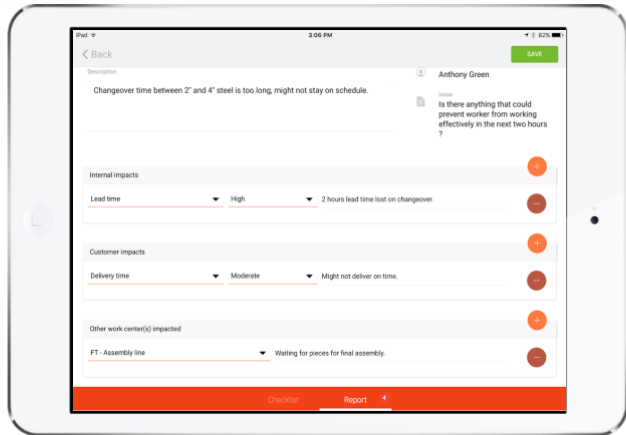
From the Ipad app, carry out your scheduled, standardized Gemba Walks and systematically report potential issues.



At the end of the Gemba Walk, the observations you enter automatically generate a report. If the issue can be solved indefinitely, press the  button. The issue clears itself from the report and is now archived in the company's statistics.

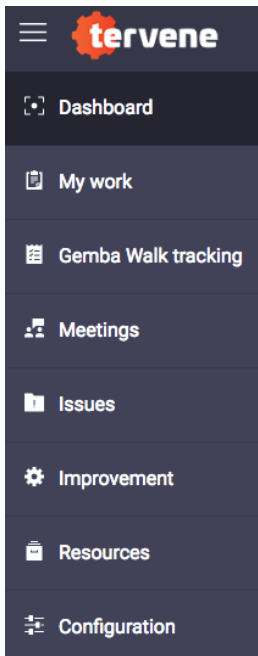
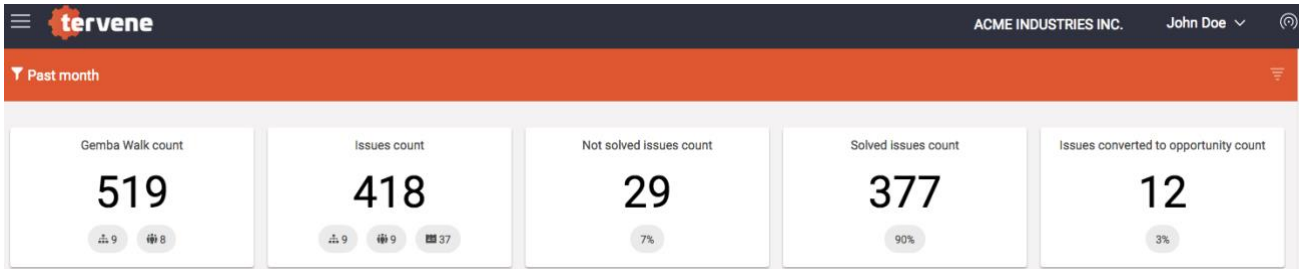
If an improvement project is needed to prevent the issue from occurring again, press the  button to convert it into an improvement opportunity.

From there, you can report internal or customer impacts, as well as which other work centers are impacted.



Visibility

One of the great advantages of using Tervene to perform Gemba Walks is the visibility it offers over the supervision activities that take place in the workplace. We've found that commitment and regular follow-up from leadership is the single most important predictor of success in the implementation of a continuous improvement culture.



From the many dashboards included in the web interface, higher management can keep track of key indicators:

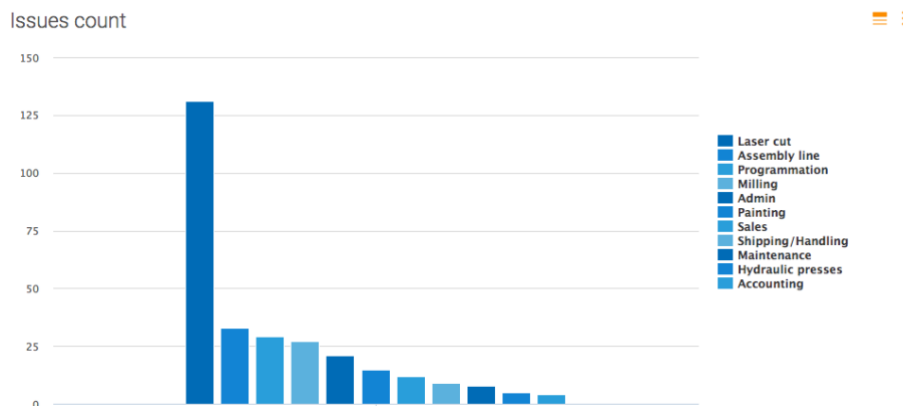
- Number of Gemba Walks carried out.
- Number of issues identified.
- Number of issues by category.
- Details on every issue found.
- Pictures taken during the Gemba Walk.

All this data can be viewed and filtered by date, work center, team leader, impacts, category, etc.

You can easily figure out which department has the most issues, who performs his/her Gemba Walks, what kind of recurring problems they uncover, etc.

The administration console helps management decide which challenges to address next based on their importance.

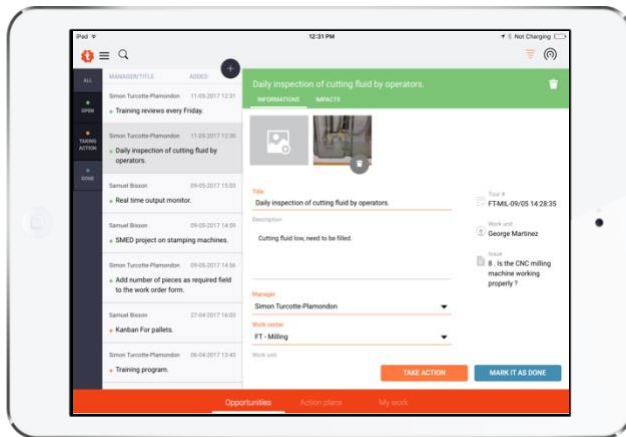
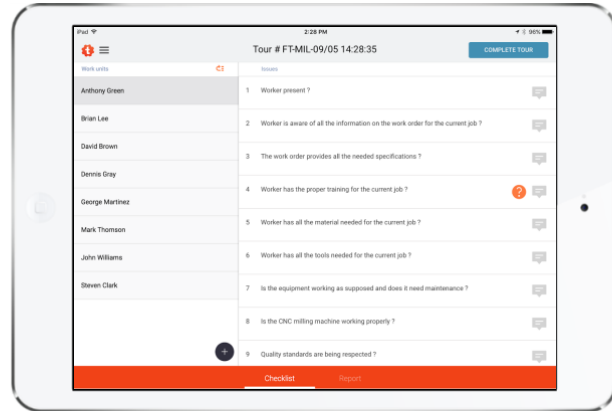
Pareto analysis suggests that most issues come from the laser cutting department.



Centralized improvement tool

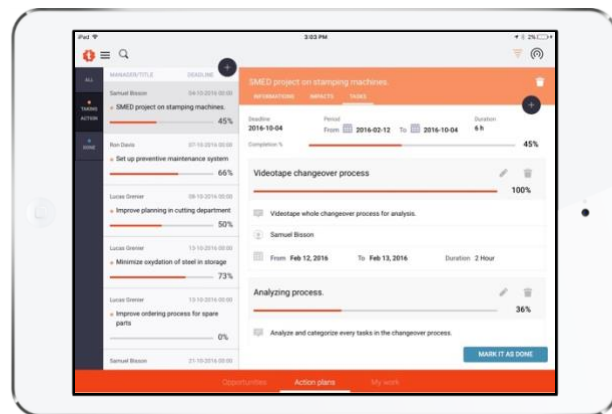
From the moment an issue arises to when an improvement project is successfully carried out, Tervene manages the data for you.

Gemba Walks



Improvement opportunities management

Improvement project management





Support

With more than 25 years of experience in operational performance, Tervene aims to simplify the implementation of a continuous improvement culture. Strong from more than 200 successful implementations, our training program and implementation guide have been specifically designed to address every possible potential threat to the project success. Tervene also offers on-site coaching as well as post-implementation support.



By choosing Tervene, you get access to a step by step implementation guide as well as PowerPoint presentations to train your employees without reinventing the wheel.



Who's using Tervene?



BOMBARDIER



SAFRAN
AEROSPACE DEFENCE SECURITY

Question? Comment?

Get in touch with us at info@tervene.com or visit.tervene.com